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CHAPTER IV

GAMES

517 121 [177] THE subject of games, lying on the border-line of social customs, was one which was not fully investigated. The Bella Coola, like all other peoples, have a number of sports and pastimes and although the old diversions are being forgotten by the younger people, many of the old men and women are familiar with those played in their youth. As isolated customs these may be of small value, but games of all kinds often preserve ancient practices and, as providing useful clues to the spread of peoples or of culture, are worthy of investigation. Unfortunately, lack of time made it impossible to give the subject the attention it deserved, and the few games here described must not be considered an exhaustive treatment of the subject.

526 [171] [628] Though less fond of competitive sports than the Indians of the Plains, the Bella Coola enjoy canoe-racing and wrestling. The former appears to have been an ancient diversion; picked crews from different villages competed amid the encouraging shouts of their fellows, and even now the younger men are anxious to display their skill in this respect. Wrestling, which [177] used to be common during all non-sacred gatherings, has almost entirely disappeared since the prohibition of the potlatch.

538 [517] The favourite sedentary pastime, enjoyed equally by young and old, is the telling of stories. Those of a sacred nature, especially ancestral myths, are reserved of course for ceremonial occasions, but the older men and women remember [825] many tales describing the exploits of birds and animals which are recounted again and again to the enjoyment of the listeners, although they may have heard the same recital fifty times. Children enjoy the companionship of some old story-teller and it is a common sight to see an old man or woman, surrounded by an eager group, explaining once more how Raven outwitted his rivals or was himself led into difficulties. Many of these [867] stories are somewhat indecent; others appear brutally frank,

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but the Bella Coola do not consider this aspect and the children grow up in an atmosphere entirely lacking in restraint of speech. Some stories teach a moral lesson, but they are recounted merely for entertainment. At the present time, no one knows who invented the stories; they have been handed down from dim antiquity and alterations or embellishments are considered improper, while the composition of new tales appears to be unknown.

Another pastime is smoking. Among some Indian tribes the practice has a definite religious significance, but this appears to be lacking among the Bella Coola. Most of the men enjoy either a pipe or cigarettes, and some of the women also indulge, but few carry the habit to excess. All the older people affirmed that their ancestors had smoked for generations. Tobacco was not grown, but kinnikinick, *milix*ʷ', was used, and also a plant known as *lsaix*'. Another smoking mixture was bark of *lsxwatelp*, toasted before a fire until dried and brown, and then crumbled between the hands. These materials have given place entirely to imported tobacco, and the white man's pipe has replaced the native one. The latter consisted of a gooseberry cane from which the pith had been extracted; sometimes a small bowl of elderberry wood was added, but often the mixture to be smoked was simply placed within the end of the hollow stem.

Adults, especially the men, are addicted to gambling. They are fond of placing stakes on a race or other trial of strength, and enjoy all kinds of games of chance. Some of the younger men have mastered a few of the simpler games of cards on which they spend a certain amount of time and money. The favourite gambling game, however, is one found in all parts of the coast, which is played with a pack of fifty-four smoothed crabapple sticks. The rules are complicated and no effort was made to learn more than the general principles. The pieces are divided among the eight or ten contestants and concealed; then one player guesses in whose hand a certain marked stick is hidden. If he is successful, the others pay him a forfeit; if

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[426] *ăkwekam:* Excess of amount returned over that previously received as an investment present.
Aiamkihka: One of the nine supernatural siblings.
Aiilaxs: 1—Supernatural beings who drone as the sun moves.
2—Voice of the supernatural woman, *Snitsmăn·a*; the term is occasionally applied to the being herself. The sound is produced by *kusiut* whistles.
Aimălotla: One of the nine supernatural siblings.
Aimaltua: "The Coming of Foul Weather," in the language of supernatural beings: The phenomenon is semi-anthropomorphized.
Aimă·ts: 1—Village in the lower Bella Coola valley.
2—Ancient chief from whom the village is supposedly named.
Aiqwaiosamlaix: *Kusiut* name of a Bella Coola man; the designation is of Kwakiutl origin.
[821] *Aiqwaiust:* Supernatural beings who blacken the face of the moon at eclipses.
Aiisamka: 1—One of the first women to settle at *Tă·ia* in the beginning of time.
2—Daughter of an *ustămx* chief mentioned in an ancient story.
Aiutla: 1—One of the designations of *Kămai·ts*, the mysterious supernatural woman.
2—Ferocious, awe-inspiring, *adjective*.
[526] *ăkatxyu:* Swing consisting of two long ropes with cross-seat.
[824] *ăkpădultsŏ:* Spruce leaves.
Ăkamtci: *Kusiut* name of a Bella Coola man.
ăljpotnam: Lehal.
Ălkălălis: 1—One of the first men to settle at Calvert Island in the beginning of time.
2—One of the first men to settle at *Nuxwălst* in the beginning of time.
3—One of the first men to settle at *Aimă·ts* in the beginning of time.
ălkdjălos: Stake supporting olachen net.
[796] *ălkexpămm:* Ritual repeated at intervals between the allotment of tasks for a potlatch, and the coming of a supernatural being to the first *nusuk* initiate.
ălk", *plural*, *wealk"ats:* Herald.
Ălokănam: *Kusiut* name of a Bella Coola man.
[533] *ălox:* Third part of song.
'ălox: Pleasure expedition of boys and girls to the forest.
[517] *Ă'lox:* Name of an isolated star.
[82] *Ălqoilxs:* Supernatural man-eater, patron of Cannibals.
Ălqtcălos: Stick decorated with abalone-shell used by one of the settlers in the upper Bella Coola valley in the beginning of time.
Ălqwulus: Supernatural female berry-picker resident in the land of the dead.
ălsaia: Announcer.
Ălsukwlakse·s: Bay of the Thousand Islands near Namu.
Ălusknaix: *Kusiut* name of a Bella Coola man.
ălxotla: Cannibal.
[587] *ălxwalăm:* Marriage with sister of a deceased wife; the word is undoubtedly connected with the verb, *to bequeath*.
Ămăkwis: Supernatural creature similar to a human being.
Ămăla: Supernatural woman, wife of Cold Wind and mother of Ice.
Ămălălx: Bella Bella man mentioned in an ancient story.
[425] [553] [584] *ămăl-tțem:* The transference of a name, during the period of engagement, from the father of the future bridegroom to the father of the future bride.

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Xemlaix: One of the first men to settle at *Q̓omq̓o·ts* in the beginning of time.
Xemtmm: *Kusiut* name of a *Sîskiutl* man.
Xemxemälotla: 1—One of the nine supernatural siblings.
2—Ancestral name of a Bella Coola man.
Xemxemlaix: *Suaok* name brought from above in the beginning of time.
Xemxemtmm: 1—Supernatural beings who request the sun to appear.
[533] 2—One of the first men to settle at *Alq̓älaxl* in the beginning of time.
xe·tla: Boastful type of song used by chiefs on war expeditions and at potlatches.
Xedilkos: One of the first men to settle at *Q̓otînelos* in the beginning of time.
Xelāsu: *Kusiut* name of a Kimsquit woman. The designation is of Bella Bella origin.
[825] *ɣaɣa:* Marten.
[412] *ɣîls:* Stone axe.
xlixl: Party of potlatch messengers and the invitation they bear.
[203] *Ximpdimut:* Man mentioned in an ancient story.
Ximxmlaix: *A'alk* man mentioned in an ancient story.
Ximxmeslaix: Celebrated female shaman.
ɣuɣunäs·i, plural, ɣuɣunäsoksi: Little girl.
[821] *Xuɣines:* 1—"Little Girls": Group of stars in the Great Bear.
[517] 2—Picnic, especially one on which fern root is gathered.
Xuxais: Bella Coola term for the Carriers living near Ootsa Lake. This is said to be their own name for themselves.
Xuximän·a, "Right Foot": *Stuɣ* repository named from part of a supernatural creature.
Xuɣis: Mountain in the Carrier country.
xuxmänoäs: Spirit, one of the supernatural elements in the human body.
xläxtmm: Ceremony prior to a potlatch when tasks are allotted and the donor's house destroyed.
xläni: The entrusting, before death, of a name for the benefit of a relative.
[586] *Xlikwals:* Mountain in the upper Bella Coola valley.
xlokun·imut: The irrevocable desertion of her husband by a wife.
[825] *Xmaxots:* Locality below *Nusq̓alst.*
ɣmɣmatsl: Minnows.
[601] *ɣmes:* Woman, or wife in indirect address (*tci ɣmesläix:* My wife).
[614] *ɣmesäxta:* Female relatives of same ancestral family, term of indirect address.
ɣmesdäm or *nuɣmesdäm:* The right by which a husband uses his wife's land, though it is not his own.
[423] *Xnutli:* Bella Coola sorcerer living in the last century.
xoksli: The forcible washing of a Cannibal.
Xolaxwosem: Name acquired by a man mentioned in an ancient story.
[785] *xoldjut:* Intercourse held during ceremonial chastity; the term has a sacred significance.
[831] *Xomtsla:* Male professional singer who came down to the Dean River in the beginning of time.
Xomxomqa: Ancestral name of a *Stuɣ* man. The designation is said to have come from Smith Inlet.
Xonɣotäm: Supernatural scoop-net fisherman, servant of the supreme god.
Xoqotlis: Bella Coola man mentioned in an ancient story.